

WAIS: Is It the Lotus 1-2-3 of the Internet?

CARL MALAMUD can be reached via the Internet at carl@malamud.com. The opinions expressed here are his own.

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A new application called WAIS may prove to be the kicker for the Internet. Mind you, the Internet hasn't really needed a kicker. It doubles in size every seven months.

If you look at what people are doing on the Internet, though, you see the same old, same old. Electronic mail, FTP for file transfer, and Telnet virtual terminals are the three fundamental applications. The computing paradigms are basically the same ones invented in the early days of the Arpanet in the 1970s.



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What makes this platform interesting is the kind of servers and client interfaces that have developed. Servers now available have an incredible range of information and are run by a gamut of groups. Interested in religion? You can dispatch queries to servers that have the full text of the Koran, the Book of Mormon, and the Bible.

Need information about water quality in Alaskan river basins? Servers ranging from the Columbia Law Library to a global weather change master directory will find dozens of relevant documents.

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think of this as a personalized newspaper.

WAIS can be run on a local network as a corporate information service. Or, for an easy entry to WAIS, a few workstations or PCs can access the servers already available

on the Internet. Most effective is to do both, running a local server for corporate information and hooking up to the Internet to open up a broad universe of info for employees.

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